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ABSTRACT

The paper addresses the dichotomy between theory and practice in criminal justice curricula and suggests directions for graduate work in criminal justice. Five hierarchical models for undergraduate and graduate education which would bring together both theory and practice are briefly diagrammed. The focus of each model is a question which is answered in both a practical (job function) and theoretical (educational focus) mode. The first four models reflect an increasingly complex and comprehensive approach in dealing with the same problem. Graduate education would encompass the fifth model. It provides analysis of various theoretical approaches in combination with pragmatic problem solving. Academic and nonacademic experiences are coordinated and the interaction of theory and practice provides a check and balance system. (Author/KC)

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Criminal Justice Education:

A Perspective

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this paper is to delineate this author's perspective of the development of an educational process in Criminal Justice. An interpretation of the educational process as an interchange of theory and practice is proposed as an essential process in curriculum development. A quality curriculum is considered to be a function of (1) bridging the gap between the theoretician and practitioner, (2) defining distinctions between undergraduate and graduate training, and (3) identification of an educational model that will best serve the desired educational process.

Criminal Justice Education:
A Perspective

Criminal Justice education is a relatively new area of academic programming. Historically, 1929 marks the first academic program offering an advanced degree in Criminal Justice. Through the years few academic institutions offered educational degrees in Criminal Justice. With the advent of the Sixties the picture of education for Criminal Justice changed. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration was created and funding was made available for the creation and implementation of Criminal Justice Educational programs (Tenney, 1971, pp. 1-5).

Three primary concerns of Criminal Justice Educators are:

(1) Should a curriculum integrate both theory and practice of the field? (2) How are graduate and undergraduate education to be distinguished? (3) Should a distinction between Criminal Justice and Criminology be made? The purpose of this paper is to address the dichotomy between theory and practice, and, to delineate graduate education in relation to other levels of education. This author does not presume to make a definitive distinction between Criminal Justice and Criminology, but rather conducts a structural analysis which may be applicable to the broader frames of reference of curriculum design. Since there is constant debate on defining Criminal Justice and Criminology and, as yet, there is no consensus among professionals, the term Criminal Justice is used in this paper

to include curriculums which emphasize the study of crime and the Criminal Justice System.

While Criminal Justice as an academic program is new, the problems created by the education of Criminal Justice students are not. Primary in any endeavor to educate is the interface between theory and practice. Theory encompasses the writing and teaching of certain general laws of human behavior. Practice deals with finding solutions to immediate problems (Datan, 1975). Theories develop over a period of time and are usually generated by the university community. On the other hand, the pressing concerns of practitioners in their daily activities preclude them from entertaining the possibilities and alternative behaviors that the academicians may contemplate at their leisure. For example, consider an officer on his beat. He turns into an alley and finds two people fighting with knives. In a moment, one of the individuals sees the officer and runs; the other individual turns, with knife in hand, and confronts the officer. How many possible behavioral reactions will the officer be able to contemplate? How many could an academician contemplate sitting in his office? Which would be more likely to consider the social and psychological developmental history of the attacker? Which would be more likely to consider whether or not he should step forward or sideways?

A critical analysis of the job functions of the theoretician and practitioner indicates that the two roles can be differentiated by the type of thinking required in their respective jobs. The university community supports the identification and formal solution of problems, whereas, the practitioner's support system is to solve

specific concrete problems. In the formalization process of solving a problem the theoretician (1) objectifies the phenomenon, (2) reduces it to its most parsimonious form, (3) identifies alternatives, and, then (4) looks for general solutions. For the practitioner, concrete problem solving includes (1) identification of the problem area, (2) analysis of the given parts, and then (3) providing a viable solution to the specific problem. The theoretician attempts to delineate general laws; the specificity of the practitioner's problems do not support a general approach to problem solving.

From this author's frame of reference, the apparent dichotomy between theory and practice needs to be bridged. A choice of one method over the other short circuits the totality of the process of problem solving. This may be illustrated through the stories of the king's new wardrobe and the pig farmer. The king believes he has the finest wardrobe of all times. Immersed in the idea of his new wardrobe he walks down the streets of his kingdom nude, only to be disillusioned by a child's words: "The king has no clothes on." Ideally and theoretically, the king's wardrobe was exquisite. In reality, it left a great deal to be desired. On the other hand, the pig farmer considers his job to be of great benefit to others. He tends to the care of his pigs daily. His daily routine occupies his approach to life. Immersed in his work, the farmer takes his pigs to market only to find similar disillusionment: "He stinks." And because he stinks, no one wants to get close enough to him to bargain with him for his superior quality pigs. His situation suffers from the broader perspective another reference system could offer.

Analysis of the either-or dichotomy that the king and the farmer are caught in reveals the problematic nature of their constructions of the state of the world. From a purely theoretical frame of reference, the king has an elaborate house plan for a potentially well built structure, but lacks the necessary skills to make it "real". From a purely pragmatic frame of reference, the farmer has built a house without plans, thus, he has a house that lacks structural perspective. Although there is potential goodness in both perspectives, neither has the most potent solution. The coordination of good plans and good skills would produce a product that would be well planned and well built, thus structurally sound.

The area of Criminal Justice appears to be fruitful for the initiation of an interface between theory and practice. It is a discipline which in practice serves many functions for the police, courts, and corrections at the city, county, state, and federal levels. As yet, academic programs have not tapped many of these potential resources available in designing a viable educational curriculum. In his review of curriculum development projects for Law Enforcement Degrees, Tenney (1971, pp. 5-18) distinguished three categories of curricula. The training curriculum emphasizes the job skills of the practitioner. The social science curriculum is oriented to teaching about a particular subject. A professional curriculum emphasizes the application of theoretical skills in an applied situation. The majority of Law Enforcement programs reviewed by Tenney emphasized training curriculum and less than seven percent emphasized a professional curriculum.

Simpson (1979) has reviewed various perspectives on Criminology as an academic discipline. He stated that:

"It seems therefore that the discipline is under attack from two opposite poles: from the radicals, who protest the lack of emphasis on the overall social structure as creating criminogenic conditions, and from the conservatives, who denigrate the practical accomplishments that have been achieved." (p. 45)

In summary, an educational model should in some way deal with bridging the gap between theory and practice. Historically, the field of Criminal Justice has opted for one or the other. Many academicians and practitioners have not, as yet, reconciled their differences in order that implementation of a curriculum design informed by both theory and by practice may be accomplished.

Educational Models

Relative to a general direction for the education of Criminal Justice students, Simpson (1979) concluded:

"One outstanding feature of the literature, (as reviewed in this paper) is the serious lack of agreement on basic issues that still prevails. Quite strong differences of opinion occur on questions concerning the fundamental direction higher education in this area should take." (p. 81)

Undergraduate education in Criminal Justice has been documented with job analysis surveys such as the one at East Central Oklahoma State University (1979). Knowledge, skills, and ability are matched to specific job requirements and the university students are trained accordingly. If undergraduate education reflects job skills proficiency in a specific agency role, what does graduate education reflect? Should agencies expect the same level of job functioning from both undergraduate and graduate people? I think not.

A graduate education includes a systematic approach to problem solving, the scientific method. Individuals are taught to critically analyze problems and invent solutions that are supported by objective, empirical data. A graduate degree needs to be multi-disciplinary to help individuals have a more comprehensive outlook and to be more creative and innovative in their approach to daily problems. Such a curriculum needs to integrate both the theory and the practice of the field. Theory is essential in the generation of new solutions for practical problems. Theories give one a broader perspective of problem solving. Practice is essential in an analysis of the importance of theory. Practice chooses the best possible alternative.

Models of the way to educate are as varied as the people who have created them. While one model emphasizes the external (practical) aspects of 'knowing', another may emphasize the internal (theoretical) aspects of 'knowing'. The external changes modify understanding for the practitioner; the external changes are structured to an internal scheme for the theoretician. In both instances one way of 'knowing'

is encouraged and valued over another. Very seldom will educational models deal with the interaction between internal and external exchanges.

From this perspective one could devise several models of job functions and educational focus based on a problem of interest. The curriculum models are centered around the notion that different job functions require not only different uses of information, but also different modes of reasoning. Each can be implemented independently or in combination. Consider the evolution of knowledge that occurs for a probation officer through the following five models:

Problem	Job function	Educational focus
1. How does a probation officer guide a client's success in the community?	To supervise the minimum behavioral requirements of the client in the community.	What are the regulations the client must abide by and what are the responsibilities of the probation officer?
2. What are the possible intervening variables contributing to the client's success?	To conduct a formal evaluation of the client.	What are the social and psychological dynamics of asocial individuals in the community?
3. What type of personal communication works best with this group?	To offer a supportive/reactive therapeutic atmosphere.	What are the assumptions concerning a client and a therapist in the various therapeutic approaches?
4. How does the interactions of the police, courts, rehabilitation agencies and probation officer affect decisions?	To utilize various community resources to inform decisions made about the client.	What are the functions of the police, courts, rehabilitation agencies and probation officer in the Criminal Justice System?
5. What probable circumstances got the client where he is today and is it possible that he may successfully function in the community?	To decide what community services would best benefit the client and to make interventions in consideration of the client's well being.	What dynamics interacting with and independent of the Criminal Justice structure are instrumental in the success of asocial personalities in the community?

These five models represent a hierarchical grouping of knowledge. The first model is higher in the practical skills and lowest in theoretical knowledge. Models Two and Three add more basic theoretical information illustrated by the evaluative and therapeutic skills respectively. Model Four is the culmination of the information in the first three, plus, the integration of a broader perspective of the job function in the process of the administration of justice. These first four models reflect an increasingly complex and comprehensive approach in dealing with the same problem. The depth and breadth of Model Five is not only due to the addition of a wider range of perspectives, but also attributable to the formal integration of the theoretical and practical knowledge of the first four models.

Imagine, if you will, a diagram of concentric circles. The center circle is the self and all succeeding circles reflect the degree to which the self integrates with that which is defined outside self. As we move toward the outermost circle, the environmental system becomes increasingly more complex. We no longer can consider only self, or only self plus significant others, or only self, significant others, plus the immediate social environment, etc., but we must consider the reciprocity of the self in the world.

In summary, these five different approaches to job functioning and educational focus trace an evolution of understanding from the initial pragmatic, isolated perspective to the final reciprocal and coordinated perspective of various theoretical systems and related job functions. Graduate education would encompass the last type of

model. Ideally, it would offer a multidisciplinary approach to problem solving centered in an environment that supports cooperation and coordination of agencies and universities.

Conclusions

A curriculum model for a graduate degree in Criminal Justice should provide the necessary interchange between theoretical and pragmatic perspectives. An advanced educational program needs to provide analysis of various theoretical approaches in combination with pragmatic problem solving. The program should reflect decision making in the context of the empirical situation. The academic and non-academic experiences need to be coordinated to the invention of possible alternative solutions with the implementation of the "best" solution. For a specific job function the best solution is provided by the interaction of theory and practice appropriate to that level. Theory provides a larger perspective for practice. The practical keeps theory rooted in the real world. The two in interaction provide a necessary and vital check and balance system.

The design for an advanced degree in Criminal Justice may have many facets. There are several exemplary programs which offer advanced degrees in Criminal Justice, however, the generalizability of these models to other geographic areas is problematic. While these schools do not offer a general curriculum model, they do offer guides to the development of a model curriculum in Criminal Justice.

The diversity of educational viewpoints and pragmatic problems makes the design and implementation of a quality curriculum a formidable, but not impossible, job. The historical development of

of the field can offer the identification of job skills for other levels of education, thus, delineating specificities of what an advanced degree should not offer. The views from both agency and university people can offer information concerning the needed interface between theory and practice. The direction the educational process should take can be provided by objective evaluations by students, faculty, and practitioners.

In conclusion, a curriculum for tomorrow should not be that which was designed for yesterday. A constant effort is required by all professionals in the field to keep the reconstruction of and, thus, the evaluation of curriculum innovative enough to deal with the problems of tomorrow.

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